

NWItimes: Jack Lanigan honored for contributions to manufacturing

By Meredith Colias



In a bid to highlight the importance of local manufacturing, over 150 representatives from business, education and nonprofit sectors were on hand Wednesday evening in Homewood to honor Mi-Jack Products founder Jack Lanigan Sr.

The Chicago Southland Economic Development Corp. and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle awarded the head of the Hazel Crest, Ill.-based company its first “Big Shoes” award for significant contributions to manufacturing at the Calumet Country Club.

Mi-Jack produces industrial double-sided cranes designed to lift heavy loads like concrete, shipment crates, or rail car containers to be unloaded.

Lanigan has a home in Valparaiso but lives primarily in Chicago's southwest suburbs, according to company spokesman Steve Irwin.

Organizers said Lanigan was a good choice for the inaugural award because he had built up the business started in his Dolton home in 1954 into an internationally recognized brand and group of companies. The company grew from 25 employees in 1973 to nearly 1,000 employees today just based out of its Hazel Crest office.

“Everybody knows Mi-Jack,” said Denise Rzonca, Calumet City Community and Economic Development executive assistant, who helped organize the event. “To watch the way they do business, they are just great people.”

The event was also part of the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corp.’s first fundraiser with contributions from two dozen organizations including CSX and ComEd.

Rzonca said they expected to raise at least \$18,000 from donors at the event. The money is to help fund future workforce training and entrepreneurial manufacturing initiatives, said Reggie Greenwood, director of economic development for the South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association.

Lanigan said he was honored by the award.

“I was really amazed. It means a lot to me,” he said.

“He's an example of this idea that manufacturing is a pathway” to economic development, Greenwood said. “The wealth of our area used to be in manufacturing. People can have a middle class job working in a manufacturing job.”

“Everybody needs somebody to help them,” Lanigan said in his acceptance speech. He said the key to the company’s success was to treat both customers and employees well.

“It’s important for us to continue to make things,” Preckwinkle said after the event.
“These are good and decent jobs for ordinary people and I am very grateful to Mi-Jack for having a manufacturing facility here in the Southland.”
